

**Environmental Services Advisory Committee (ESAC)  
2013 Annual Report (January 1-December 31, 2013)  
March 5, 2014**

The Environmental Services Department (ES) is a completely self-supporting, municipally-owned, enterprise utility of the City of Tucson. Costs of providing services to customers are funded entirely by user charges, fees, and other revenues. No General Fund monies are provided to the department and ES pays \$3.7 million each year (adjusted annually) to the General Fund.

ES has a 226-square-mile service area, 222 authorized FTE, and 210 actual full-time employees. It provides weekly trash and recycling collection service to approximately 132,000 residential customers and approximately 3400 commercial customers. ES owns and operates the Los Reales Landfill, serving Tucson and Pima County and manages the Tucson/Pima County Household Hazardous Waste (HHW)

The **Environmental Services Advisory Committee (ESAC)** reviews the budget and operations of the ES and provides the following 2013 annual report on Environmental Services to the Tucson Mayor and Council.

**ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ESAC)**

- **CREATED BY:** Resolution No. 18893, April 23, 2001; Resolution No. 19682, September 15, 2003; and Ordinance No. 10120, February 15, 2005
- **MEMBERSHIP:** Thirteen (13) regular members. The Mayor and Council Members each appoint one (1) member. The City Manager nominates six (6) members for final approval by Mayor and Council.
- **QUORUM:** 7 members.
- **QUALIFICATIONS:** Members shall be either residential or commercial customers of Environmental Services, and shall serve without compensation.
- **FUNCTION:** ESAC shall act as the official advisory body on Environmental Service capital improvement, program planning and rate structure formulation to City government. It reviews the Environmental Service revenue requirements and recommends to the Governing Body rate adjustments as required while promoting the concerns of Environmental Service customers.

ESAC finds the department's 2013 financial planning commendable in not only providing reliable waste collection service, but in funding a comprehensive study of Tucson's current state of waste diversion; its ability to pilot innovative services such as recycling in the Reid Park golf courses; organic waste hauling in partnership with the University of Arizona Compost Cats; reducing residential rates by converting to larger, shared bins in alleys and trash compactors in downtown Tucson, reducing fuel costs through systematic conversion to compressed natural gas vehicles and building fueling facilities for them; building new, more efficient facilities at Los Reales landfill, building capacity to provide more reclaimed water for public use, coordinating shopping cart retrieval for retailers, and supporting the work of Tucson Clean and Beautiful and Bring Your Own Bag Tucson.

Anticipated future funding needs will include expanded funding for public outreach for the development of the City's Diversion Plan, to be pursued through partnerships with private and non-profit materials diversion programs, for expanding organic waste hauling, and for promoting greater recycling behaviors among the public.

The department continues to lose revenue from commercial collection customers and Mayor and Council are urged to support and promote commercial recycling for all City businesses in order to allow residential rates to stay affordable.

## **FINANCIAL PLANNING REPORT**

The ESAC Finance Subcommittee held 5 meetings in 2013 to review Environmental Service's proposed Operating Budget, 5-Year Capital Improvement Program Budget, and Revenue Budget. The subcommittee also reviewed ES's updated Cost of Service Model for FY 2014. The subcommittee reviewed the budget recommendations made by ES financial staff and made recommendation to present to the full ESAC.

The subcommittee reviewed ES's expenses and revenue projections on a monthly basis and noted the health of the ES fund. As an enterprise fund, the department must maintain a positive balance and it has done so. At the end of the fiscal year, the Finance Subcommittee noted with approbation, that ES is tracking both future liabilities for long-term landfill closure and post-closure monitoring costs, and accumulating necessary capital project reserves for development of future landfill cells and operation reserves.

## **ES RATES AND FEES REPORT**

The Finance Subcommittee reviewed ES's Cost of Service Model and Rates and Fee Proposals for FY 2014. Overall revenues collected for FY 2014 are projected to be slightly higher than FY 2013. Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) pilot program proved successful and a \$25 per pickup fee was approved by Mayor & Council to begin July 1, 2013. Another new fee for fiscal year 2014 is a \$48 fee for special order residential containers with lid locks for customers who have problems with wildlife knocking over their containers. Environmental Services is also establishing additional levels of landfill disposal fees for guaranteed amounts of waste disposed at the landfills.

## **WASTE REDUCTION AND DIVERSION REPORT**

### **Collections, Recycling and Public Outreach Report**

The Collections, Recycling, and Public Outreach Subcommittee has continued to review Environmental Services in three major areas over the past year, and report to the full committee any pertinent information. We feel Collections, Recycling, and Public Outreach are effectively managed and fully support the work done by the staff of Environmental Services. The Collections department has re-routed waste collection to maximize efficiency, and successfully run a shopping

cart removal program. Recycling efforts in the city continue to expand and encompass waste diversion programs including Compost Cats and Household Hazardous Waste. This subcommittee strongly supports Environmental Services' continued operation of the HHW program despite the loss of funding from Pima County. We believe the Public Outreach of Environmental Services has engaged and educated the community in all areas of waste management and diversion. The addition of a Social Media Intern is an effective tool in communicating information to customers and citizens

## **Ad Hoc Diversion Subcommittee Report**

ESAC's ad hoc Waste Diversion Subcommittee is pleased to have had the opportunity to review and make recommendations to Mayor and Council regarding the Waste Diversion Plan and Roadmap prepared by Cascadia Consulting. We met 3 times with Environmental Services (ES) staff to review and discuss the Cascadia documents, and we were able to give feedback through ES to Cascadia on their draft report.

### **ESAC Response to Cascadia's Waste Diversion Recommendations**

ESAC supports all eight of the recommendations given on page 27 – 29 of the report. As the advisory body to Mayor and Council, we ask that all of these recommendations be implemented. However, the recommendations lack concrete actions that the City could take. We are providing our own recommendations to Mayor and Council after reviewing the information Cascadia provided in their report, while incorporating the goals of Plan Tucson and integrating the local expertise of ESAC members.

Specifically, here are our comments on each of Cascadia's recommendation:

- 1) **“Define ESD's role for connecting, promoting, and tracking waste diversion”:** More specific recommendations are needed on what it means to “define” ESD's role for waste diversion
- 2) **“Require waste and recycling collectors, processors, and non-profit organizations receiving trash credits to report waste and recycling quantities to ESD”:** We agree to make this mandatory, and we recommend:
  - a. That private waste haulers and landfills be required to report annually to the Director of Environmental Services the volume of both recyclables and other waste they collect and dispose of within the City, as a condition of being licensed to operate in the City.
  - b. That charities and non-profits who collect reusable materials not recyclable at ReCommunity also be required to report the volume of those materials they collect annually to the Director of Environmental Services and receive a discount on the price of their City waste service.
- 3) **“Consider conducting a waste characterization study”:** We agree a waste characterization study is needed, but it should be deferred until we have a consistent source of data to track our waste diversion and measure our future waste diversion goals.
- 4) **“Consider further development of financial incentives for recycling and waste reduction”:** We agree rate structure incentives are needed to reduce waste. We'd like to see specific recommendations.

- 5) **“Continue efforts to increase commercial recycling”:** We recommend all commercial property owners within the City be required to have recycling service as a condition of their getting a business license in the City.
- 6) **“Continue partnerships with University of Arizona (U of A) to bolster and promote waste diversion to students and community at large”:** We agree the partnership with Compost Cats should grow, many new initiatives and partnerships are needed in this area to divert organic materials. We recommend:
  - a. Incentives are provided for professional, large-scale green waste initiatives in partnership with ES
  - b. That businesses separating their green waste for dedicated hauling receive discounts if served by ES
- 7) **“Focus ESD resources on materials still being disposed in large volumes that are not currently being captured in a systematic way, that have strong customer demand for recycling services, and that have associated waste diversion efforts that are self-sustaining, thereby not requiring any additional city funding or resources.”**

We agree with the materials identified as highest priority for diversion and the recommended strategies. However, there is a major gap, because while Cascadia includes “landscape debris” in their list, they don’t make any specific recommendations to divert “landscape debris.” Landscape debris makes up the largest percentage of residential waste (24.5%) and for all sectors makes up 12.1% of waste. We recommend:

  - a. Promoting composting of landscape debris at home through educational programming.
  - b. Partnering with local businesses like The Fairfax Companies and tree trimming companies to offer a mulching service, where landscape debris can be commercially shredded to create organic mulch for people’s yards and community green spaces.
  - c. Encouraging the use of organic mulch in residential or commercial landscapes through city codes and policies.
- 8) **“Promote the “When in doubt, recycle it” message as a cross-sector, omni-material diversion strategy”:** We strongly support the “When in doubt, recycle it” message becoming our new slogan.

### **Establishing Tucson’s Diversion Goal**

While Cascadia did not recommend establishing a waste diversion goal at this time, ESAC believes it is essential to have measurable metrics (like a waste diversion goal) that we can use to track our progress on waste diversion. We understand that better data is needed, but enough data currently exists to put qualitative metrics in place while the data collection system improves.

On page 30, Cascadia states, “...we are recommending that the City of Tucson establish a goal based upon a range of diversion efforts focusing on those individual recommendations that the City chooses to pursue, and the corresponding resulting impact on the overall diversion rate.” ESAC finds this statement vague. With current data, the Cascadia estimates the City’s diversion rate to be roughly 10%. In Cascadia’s conclusion, they state we could easily increase our diversion rate by another 10% just by implementing a “When in doubt, recycle it” campaign.

The City of Tucson and its residents have made waste diversion a high priority through Plan Tucson, Tucson's 10-year plan that was approved by Tucson residents in November 2013. In the plan, under the Environmental Quality section, the first policy recommendation is: *"Strive for a "zero waste" model for solid and hazardous waste through integrated waste management and waste reduction."*

In the spirit of that policy, we recommend setting up tiered metrics on a 25 year timeline to move us towards a high diversion rate in the direction of a "zero waste" model. ESAC's recommendations are as follows:

2016: 20% Diversion Rate  
2020: 30% Diversion Rate  
2025: 40% Diversion Rate  
2030: 50% Diversion Rate  
2035: 55% Diversion Rate  
2040: 60% Diversion Rate

### **Financial Opportunities of Waste Diversion**

Waste diversion activities have high potential to stimulate the local economy in new ways and utilize free resources that are currently ending up in the landfill. Substantial increases in waste diversion will also realize long-term financial benefits by expanding the lifespan of our landfill. ESAC makes the following financial recommendations:

- ES designate an adequate budget to cover the cost of a waste characterization study and start a waste diversion program
- The City and/or ES designate funds to support new waste diversion pilot programs with non-profit organizations, businesses, and educational institutions. The funds would be offered through a competitive, open grant process.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING REPORT**

The Engineering Subcommittee met three times in FY2013 (August 2013, November 2013, and February 2014). A meeting scheduled for May 2013 was cancelled due to lack of quorum. Subcommittee discussions centered on four major topics: Site Contamination Investigations, Cleanup Activities, and Regulatory Compliance; Plans to Improve the Current and Future Operability of Los Reales Landfill; Improvements at Other (closed) City landfills; and Support of other City of Tucson Departments. Specific projects and activities related to these major discussion topics are listed below.

### **Site Investigations, Cleanup Activities, and Regulatory Compliance**

- Conceptual Design for the Silverbell Landfill Pump and Treat System
- Old Fort Lowell Restoration Project (Adkins Property Cleanup)
- Investigation of High Methane Levels in Air at Harrison Hills
- Former Ore Mill Contamination Investigation and Contain-In-Place
- Discovery and Sampling of Incorrectly Permitted Ground Water Well north of Los Reales Landfill
- ES notified ADEQ that it believes ES has fulfilled its original responsibility for the St. Joseph's Hospital private well (well collapsed from age).

- Los Reales Permit Variance

### **Plans to Improve the Current and Future Operability of Los Reales Landfill**

- Los Reales Expansion and Property Acquisition (a.k.a. the Los Reales Buffer)
- Los Reales 80 Acre Development

### **Improvements at Other (closed) City landfills:** Tumamoc Landfill Cap Maintenance Project

### **Support of Other City of Tucson Departments**

- Preparation of the *Area-Wide Contingency Plan for Development in the Downtown Tucson Area* plan as well as posting of this document and other environmental reports on Zoombiz to make it easier for potential downtown developers to collect the information necessary for “due diligence” in preparation for property acquisition
- Brownfield Grant application submitted to EPA: If the grant is received, ES will have \$400,000 available for Phase I Assessments within the City of Tucson. Funds would be available for environmental assessments of City land (e.g., land that may needed for roadway development) and private land (e.g., downtown land).
- Parks and Recreation: Old Fort Lowell Restoration Project – ES supported the site investigation and cleanup, as well as interfacing with ADEQ on regulatory matters.
- Golf and Parks and Recreation: Conceptual Design for the Silverbell Landfill Pump and Treat System. The current concept is to supply Columbus Park and two golf course ponds (Silverbell and El Rio) with the treated water from the pump and treat system.

ES is consistently pro-active in its approach to engineering issues and promotes public understanding of the multitude of ES engineering issues (e.g., ESAC committee and subcommittee meetings; the information web pages found at <http://dot.tucsonaz.gov/es-projects/>; the publication of the *Area-Wide Contingency Plan for Development in the Downtown Tucson Area* plan).